

Felice FRAGOLA
Appl. No. 09/937,709
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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A closure for containers having an opening, comprising:
substantially rigid supporting and sealing means for insertion in a container opening, said supporting and sealing means comprising a substantially cylindrical hollow body having an open upper end and a closed lower end, and first and second outwardly extending generally annular shoulders at said upper and lower ends, respectively; and

a covering body made of flexible and resilient plastic material, said covering body covering at least a portion of and being connected to said supporting and sealing means, and being adapted to close the container opening when said closure is inserted therein;

~~wherein said supporting and sealing means comprise an upper and a lower support and sealing element operatively joined together in order to support said covering body in a longitudinal direction for preventing elongation of the plastic material of said covering body.~~

said plastic material filling the interior cavity of said hollow body and extending between said first and second shoulders, whereby said covering body is supported in a longitudinal direction by said shoulders to prevent elongation of the plastic material.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~, characterized in that said covering body is made of an elastomeric material.

Felice FRAGOLA
Appl. No. 09/937,709
February 2, 2004

4. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said covering body is adapted to cooperate by interference with the container opening to prevent the product contained therein from leaking out and to prevent gases and/or foreign substances from entering inside the container.

5. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said covering body is made of thermoplastic foam material.

6. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said covering body is made of thermosetting foam material.

7. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said covering body is made of crosslinked foam material.

8. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said closure is a plug for containers for foodstuff.

9. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that said plug is adapted to close bottles containing beverages.

10. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 9, characterized in that said plug is adapted to close bottles containing alcoholic beverages, in particular wine.

11. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that said plug is adapted to be placed onto a bottle, in order to close it, using an ordinary plugging machine, and is adapted to be removed from a bottle, when opening it, using ordinary plug removing means.

Felice FRAGOLA
Appl. No. 09/937,709
February 2, 2004

12. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 11, characterized in that said plug removing means are a corkscrew.

13. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said closure has gas-barrier characteristics, preventing gases from penetrating inside the container, and characteristics ensuring a lack of leakages of the closure material into the container, said barrier and lack-of-leakage characteristics being guaranteed for a period that is not less than the one that can be obtained with a closure made of cork.

14. (Currently Amended) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 13, characterized in that it is further equipped with barrier means ~~placed~~ on the side~~closed~~ lower end of said closurehollow body facing the container interior to provide a barrier to the atmosphere surrounding the container.

15. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 14, characterized in that said barrier means are composed of at least one thin layer.

16. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 15, characterized in that said at least one thin layer is made of a precious metal.

17. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 14, characterized in that said barrier means are composed of at least one disk made of glass.

18. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 14, characterized in that said barrier means are composed of at least one washer made of gold or glass.

Felice FRAGOLA
Appl. No. 09/937,709
February 2, 2004

Claims 19-36 (Withdrawn)

37. (Currently Amended) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said ~~supporting and sealing means comprise a reinforcing member (129) having a basically cylindrical hollow body (130) terminating at both ends in annular shoulders (131, 131'), a lower and an upper, said lower second annular shoulder (131) having~~ has a larger diameter than said upper first shoulder (131') such that said closure is frustoconical in shape, and a plurality of annular reliefs (132) being situated on the outer surface of the said hollow body (130) and being covered by said plastic material, the lower end of said hollow body (130) being closed by a base (133) and its upper end open, and the covering body being formed directly on said reinforcing member (129), in such a way that the elastomeric material fills the cavity of said hollow body (130) and the external space between said lower and upper shoulders (131, 131'), said closure being frustoconical in shape.

Claims 38 and 39 (Withdrawn)

40. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said closure is further adapted to bear, in its upper part facing outside the container, writing and/or other signs relating to the container contents.

41. (Currently Amended) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that it is further covered with a protective film placed ~~all~~ around said closure.

Felice FRAGOLA
Appl. No. 09/937,709
February 2, 2004

42. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 41, characterized in that said protective film is a silicone film.

43. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 5, in which said thermoplastic foam material is made by a hot-molding process involving the use of a fluid in the supercritical state as a blowing agent.

44. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 43, in which said fluid is nitrogen in the supercritical state.

45. (Previously Presented) The closure for containers as claimed in claim 1, in which the outside surface of said closure is marked by a laser-marking process.

46. (Previously Presented) The closure as claimed in claim 45, in which said laser is an Nd:YAG laser.